

Hrdlicka (A.)

The needs of American anthropologists

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WIDEST SENSE

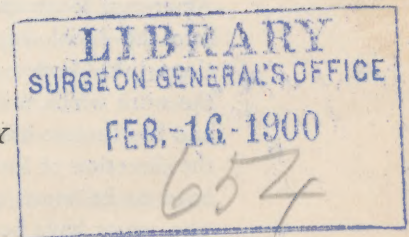
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THE NEEDS OF AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGISTS.

THERE are a few things which American anthropologists are much in need of. Anthropology is making steady progress in this country, as can be seen in the increase of workers in the science; in the amount and quality of their publications; in the number of universities and colleges, which include some part of the science in their curricula; and, finally, in the growing public interest in anthropology. Among the most recent important advantages to the science may be mentioned the establishment of a larger efficient journal, the *American Anthropologist*. At about the same time the *American Naturalist* decided to devote regularly to anthropology a part equal to that given to any of the older sciences. Section H of the American Association for the Advancement of Science has held, since 1897, two meetings a year, and both the meetings of last year met with large success. The Washington Anthropological Society has been recently strengthened by joining an allied body; while in New York there have been held the last season, under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences, successful monthly anthropological meetings. Regular courses or lectures in anthropology are given in the Columbia, Harvard, and other universities. The University of Iowa has recently organized a comprehensive anthropologic course; and there are many lectures on ethnology or archæology delivered more or less irregularly in New York, Washington, Brooklyn, Chicago, Boston, and, I believe, in San Francisco. Besides all this, much work is being actually done in the field. I need mention only the Jessup expeditions under Dr. Boas to the northwestern coast and into Asia, by the American Museum of Natural History; the expeditions southwest into the Pueblo region, by Messrs. Fewkes and Pepper; the expeditions into Mexico, by Messrs. Saville, Lumholz, Starr, and Holmes; the work which is being done in Ohio, by Mr. Moorehead and others; and the tireless efforts in the Trenton gravels and elsewhere, under the direction of Professor Fred. W. Putman. In fact, this list would have to be much prolonged in order to do justice to all the men who are or have been recently active in important field work.

All this shows beyond a doubt that the American anthropologists are active and progressing. When any science in a given country arrives at such a stage of activity as here outlined, there arise certain wants which, if attended to, make further progress more definite, systematic, and easier. Under such circumstances it is fortunate if there are established in other countries well-tried precedents which fulfill similar wants of the same science. We have such precedents in anthropology. We find them particularly in France, but also in England, Germany, and Italy. There are many good examples to follow in supplying our needs, and there are also some occurrences which ought to serve as a warning.

The one need of American anthropologists which I consider important above everything else is the establishment of an *Anthropological Institute*. There is needed a common independent center, such as the French anthropologists have in their Institute of Broca, the English in the Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. The French example is much the better, the English center being a little more than a clubhouse. Broca's Institute is a great depository of anthropologic material, which otherwise would be scattered or lost; it is a laboratory in the full sense of the word; it is a great school for students in anthropology, who come there from all countries; its lectures are free to the public; it possesses a large and very valuable anthropologic library, and almost a complete collection of anthropologic instruments, and both the books and instruments stand there for ready reference or use; finally, the Institute is the center of French anthropologists, to which are presented their best efforts, in which are held their sessions, and in which originate the most powerful impulses for further work.

The moral and practical influence of such an establishment on the science for which it stands cannot be measured. Can any one estimate how much good such an Institute could be to the American anthropologists of to-day and of the future? The American anthropologist has a great deal of difficult work before him. He is confronted with problems which are not equaled in number or importance by those of any other country. The problems do not concern the United States alone, but the whole extent of both Americas, and they are so complicated, large, and numerous, that they will require the best scientific talent and attention for generations to come. Nothing could more facilitate the solution of these problems than a first-class anthropological Institute.

As immigration progresses and various countries on this continent,

and especially in South America, become peopled, anthropology will be taken up in different places beyond the United States. By that time the United States ought to be to America in anthropology what France has been and still is to Europe. But this it cannot be without one or rather a number of first-class Institutes, which would offer everything to the foreign student which he will not be able to find at home.

It is very plain why the United States, more than any other country on this continent, should become the leader in anthropology. No other American country possesses such resources and, perhaps it might be added with justice, none such an abundance of apt and, particularly, energetic workers.

How would the establishment of an anthropological Institute be practicable? Paris gave as a place for the Broca's Institute a part of one of its public buildings, and the French government supports the establishment. Similar things might be done here, were a few influential citizens and officers of some large scientific center, or of some state, interested in the proposition. Possibly the government of the United States itself would support the project. The aid of the government would of all be the most desirable, and with it the execution of the project the most feasible. The government supports the American Bureau of Ethnology, besides other allied institutions. Perhaps the scope of the Bureau of Ethnology, which is doing excellent anthropological work, could be enlarged, until the bureau would comprise all classes of anthropological work and at the same time develop into a center of instruction in the science. In such a case there ought to be at least two branch Institutes, one in New York and one in Chicago. In case of the failure of government or state or city support, there still exists the possibility of securing the interest of one or more wealthy private persons. But all these are mere theories, and it is not my object to advocate any of them specifically. My sole aim is to arouse interest among American anthropologists in this proposition, and if I succeed in this, the practical way of effecting the project will surely be found later.

There are other things which American anthropologists, particularly those who occupy themselves more with somatological investigation, need besides an Institute, and the most important of these are a *uniform, definite nomenclature* and a *uniform system of measurements*. There are practically two systems of anthropological nomenclature, as well as of measurements, in existence; namely, the French and the German. The result of this is much confusion. It is difficult

to see why the clear, concise system of measuring, and the terms which were used by the French and English anthropologists, were modified by the Germans. The change resulted in great loss of work, especially on the German side; but this is no occasion for any critical dissertation on this subject. The fact is that there are two different systems of nomenclature and measurements, and that the American anthropologists must choose *one* of these systems in order to avoid much confusion and loss of work on their side. Furthermore, there are terms used somewhat vaguely by both the European schools and a few new terms, the meaning of all of which should soon be made as definite as possible. It might be well not to do anything in nomenclature unless it is in accord with at least the majority of European anthropologists. Section H of the American Anthropological Association of Science is the best body in which steps leading to a standard American anthropological nomenclature and measurements should be taken. Something to this effect has already been done in the section. But this society should not act, except in concord with the English and French anthropological branches of the Associations for the Advancement of Science and with the Berlin anthropologische Gesellschaft.

A few words about new terms. The coining of many new terms in anthropology is decidedly injurious and meets with much antipathy, unless the new terms were really needed and designate really new things or conceptions.

In addition to the above I should like to call the attention of the American anthropologists to a few things which would prove of advantage.

In the first place, the American student of anthropology would be exceedingly grateful to his masters, would they present him with a concise but complete history of the science in this country. It is only recently that the American Medico-Psychological Association appointed a committee for the purpose of collecting materials for and writing the history of Psychiatry in this country. Perhaps we could follow their most commendable example and do as much in our section in the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Besides lacking the history of the science, the student of anthropology in this country is much in need of reliable translations and cheap editions of American anthropological classics. There are many very valuable works of this sort in Spanish and other foreign languages, and even in English, that are accessible to but very few. We need something like the medical publications of the Sydenham Society.

So far as practical anthropological work is concerned, it is very advisable that early efforts should be extended to obtain permission for free exploration in Mexico and other American republics. There are great gaps in our knowledge and collections of these regions, and efforts to fill these meet with more and more difficulty, especially in Mexico, on account of the restrictions imposed upon explorations. These restrictions would be excusable if they would lead to the securing of the very valuable archæological and ethnological material found in the countries where these rules have been made, but such is far from being the case. The countries which are richest in various remains do very little to preserve these remains. In the mean time valuable things are being constantly destroyed by ignorant people. The anthropologists of the United States should not allow these matters to go on, but make a determined effort to have the restrictions to explorations recalled. At this very moment one of the Mexican custom houses holds a valuable and largely unique, though fortunately not large, American collection. The collection consists of petroglyphs which were obtained at great pains from the deep Sierras, where they were going to a speedy ruin. They are held on the supposition that they are parts of "some Aztec temple."

In the last place, it seems to me to be to our best interest to prevent as far as possible the exportation of other than duplicate specimens of American aboriginal art into Europe. Many collections that go to Europe, particularly to Germany and France, could be bought here. This would save the American student the necessity of consulting, in his investigations concerning his own or near countries, European publications and museums.

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NEW YORK.

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